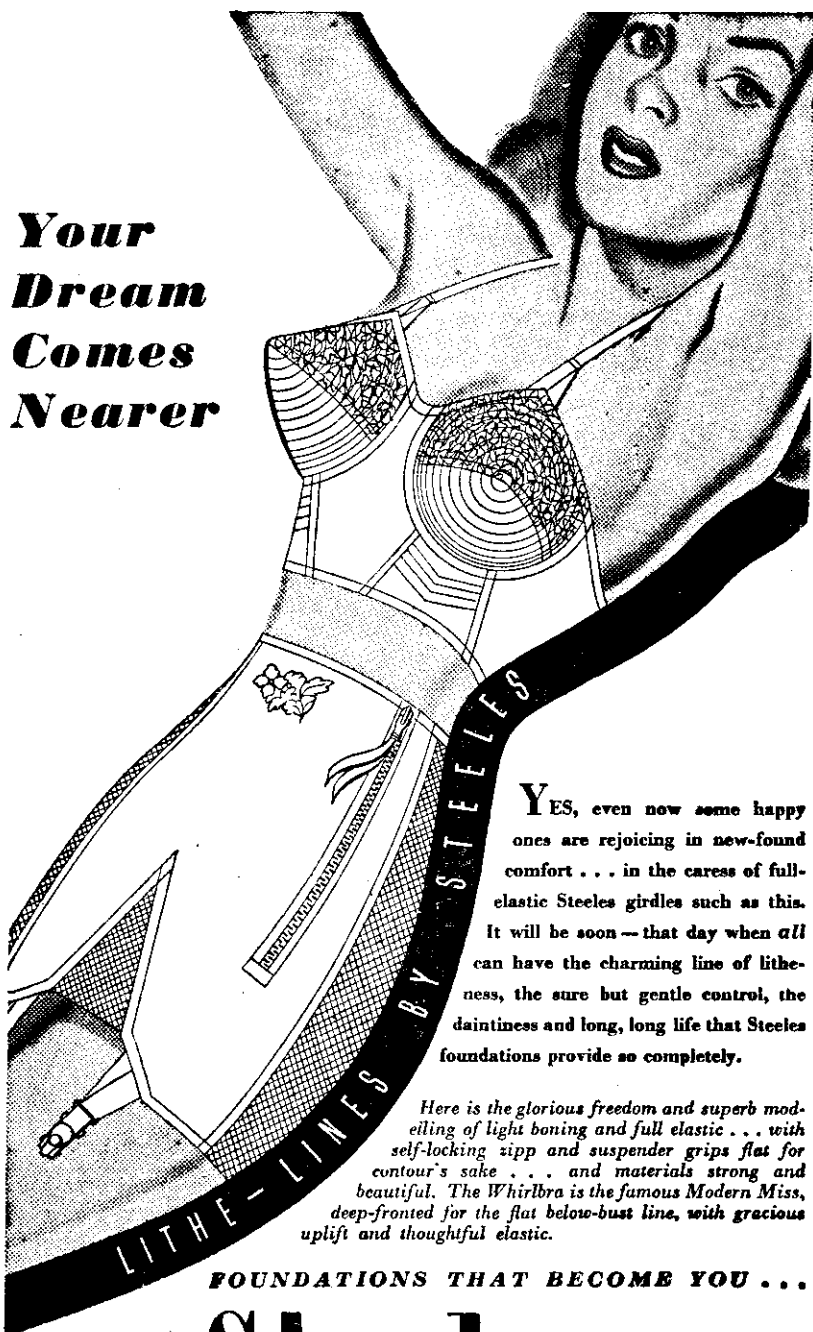


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BOOKS

ALPINE VETERAN

MEMORIES OF MOUNTAINS AND MEN.
By Arthur P. Harper. (Simpson & Williams, Ltd.)

(Reviewed by John Pascoe)

It's a yo, and a ho, and away we go
With rope and axe, and swags on backs.
But old A.P. he said to me,
"Oh . . . watch in the sky for the big
hogsbacks."

THUS runs the refrain of a mountaineer's parody of a sea shanty. And "A.P." is the author of this latest book. My generation of climbers knows Mr. Harper as a man whose first book,

whose dominant characteristics are rain in the valleys and mist, or worse, on the tops, goes the hard way. Yet it was the way that got the best from a man. And the story that Harper told in *Pioneer Work* is one of endurance that will endure. *Memories* gives us the background of training and circumstance that led to Harper's explorations, further details of his experiences, and subsequent events to the present day that are all closely linked with the development of New Zealand mountaineering, and of its most widely spread club, the New Zealand Alpine Club.



A. P. HARPER with (left) CHARLES DOUGLAS—a snapshot taken on the Cook River in 1894

Pioneer Work in the Alps of New Zealand (1896) has been out of print for many years, whose love of the mountains has been such that he continued alpine work at an age when most men counted experiences of the snows in the past tense, and whose interest in the administration of mountaineering as a sport has been forceful and lively, often to the point of controversy. Any evaluation of a man and his times is all the better for his reminiscences, and this new volume adds much for which an enquirer would have asked. His contemporary, G. E. Mannering, has done us similar service in writing two books. It is not too much to say that the first generation of New Zealand mountaineers could stand or fall by the written word of these two grand old men. And it has stood.

For both Mannering and Harper were active young men in the 'nineties—an era when few young men were active in the mountains. Peak after peak stretched on the jagged skylines awaiting men bold and strong enough to reach their summits. Mount Cook itself was virgin, and Mannering made fine attempts, only to be beaten near the top of the last ice-cap. Harper was capable of high climbing, but had decided to concentrate on Westland exploration. So they divided their ways, and the Southern Alps did not lose because each man became a specialist.

INTEREST in the life and times of A. P. Harper may be focused on his work in South Westland. Whoever reaches the great peaks and glaciers of the Main Divide by traversing dense bush and deep gorges in a climate

If *Memories* has a narrative that is less stirring and less knit than *Pioneer Work*, it is because it has a wider appeal—an appeal that, while embracing the specialised interest of mountaineering, will attract all who discover in a volume of reminiscences parts of life that have also affected them, or those who, having most of their life ahead of them, find much to study in the experiences of past generations.

BEGIN, then, with the author when, in 1869, he wore his first pair of braces on the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh to Christchurch. And it takes any reader into the past to learn that on a visit to England with his parents he went to school there and was patted on the head by Disraeli. A return to school in Canterbury was followed by another visit to England, that time for a University education, which included an acquaintance with Lewis Carroll. On vacation from Oxford Harper made his first trip to Switzerland in 1887. His first climb was the Roche de Naye, 6700 feet; modest enough, but though it involved him and his companion in a minor accident, it must have been a red-letter day in a life that became devoted to mountains thousands of miles away.

After reading for the Bar in London, he returned to Switzerland and climbed the Monch, and the Finisterraarhorn. It was natural that on going back to Christchurch he felt that the horizon was wide. *Memories* digresses on society life in the 'nineties, a valuable picture whatever the political sympathies of the reader. But the most immediate interest

(continued on next page)